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TRUTH AND IDEAS OF IMAGINATION IN THE *TRACTATUS DE INTELLECTUS EMENDATIONE*

Spinoza devotes well over a third of his unfinished *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (*TTE*) to detailed discussions of three kinds of 'ideas' derived from the imagination: fiction, falsity, and doubt. The discussions of these ideas play a crucial role in the overall plan of the *TIE*. This plan is laid out in §49, which both summarizes the progress of the *TIE* up to that point and indicates what is to follow. According to this summary, the prior portion of the work has served to motivate and introduce his philosophical Method by (a) treating *the end toward which we strive to direct all our thoughts* [§§1-17]; (b) teaching *which is the best perception, by whose aid we can reach our perfection* [§§18-29]; and (c) showing *which is the first path our mind must enter on to begin well - which is to proceed in its investigation according to certain laws, taking as a standard a given true idea* [§§30-48]. With these things done, Spinoza indicates, we may now proceed to the Method itself, which is to consist of four parts:

> *...the Method must, first, show how to distinguish a true idea from all other perceptions, and to restrain the mind from those other perceptions; second, teach rules so that we may perceive things unknown according to such a standard; third, establish an order, so that we do not become weary with trifles. When we came to know this method, we saw, fourth, that it will be most perfect when we have the idea of the most perfect Being.*[1]

Of these four projected parts of the Method, only the first, concerned with distinguishing true ideas from all other perceptions and restraining the mind from these others, is actually completed in the *TIE*, in §§50-90; the second part, which begins with §91, remains unfinished when the work breaks of after §110.[2] The discussions of fiction, falsity, and doubt constitute nearly all of this *first part* of the Method.

Despite the prominence of these discussions, however, it has frequently been questioned whether their inclusion is compatible with

the work's conceptions of truth and Method. H.H. Joachim, in his influential book-length study of the *TIE*, states the objection as follows:

> *The true idea is an act of knowledge; and, as such, it is an experience true absolutely in its content and certain absolutely in its form. But, if so, the true idea, as the concrete indissoluble unity of absolute truth and absolute certainty, is an experience* ***sui generis****. It stands alone, unique and unmistakable, sundered utterly from supposals fictions, errors, and doubts; and confusion either way is impossible. The true idea cannot be mistaken for any other experience, nor any other experience for the true idea ... and the first part of the Doctrine of Method ought to have begun and ended with the exposition of the true idea as an act of absolute knowledge and certainty in one* (Joachim 1958, pp. 186s.).

And Edwin Curley writes in the Editorial Preface to his translation of the *TIE* that:

> *The most important question, perhaps, is whether the whole concept of method, as Spinoza here presents it, is not incoherent, and so doomed to failure. On the one hand, the truth is supposed to require no sign, and having a true idea is supposed to be sufficient to remove doubt (§36); on the other, the method is supposed, among other things, to teach us what a true idea is, and how to distinguish it from other perceptions* (§37)(Spinoza 1985, p. 5).[3]

In this paper, I will argue that Spinoza's attempt in the *TIE* to distinguish true ideas from others by means of an extended treatment of fiction, falsity, and doubt is not incompatible with his accounts of truth and Method. In the first section of the paper, I will examine his account of the nature of true ideas, and the relation of this account to his conception of philosophical Method. In particular, I will seek to determine the meaning and bearing of his two claims that truth *requires no sign* and is *sufficient to remove all doubt.* In doing so, I will argue that these claims are best understood as responses to Descartes' account of the relations between clarity and distinctness, certainty, and truth. In the second section, I will examine Spinoza's stated goals for the first part of the Method and his pursuit of those goals in his discussions of fiction, falsity, and doubt. I will argue both that his rationale for discussing these ideas is sound, and that the specific claims he makes about them are consistent with his account's

of truth and Method. In the final section, I will raise a related objection, not to the consistency of the Method, but to its execution.

I

Method and true ideas.

Spinoza describes the Method, true ideas, and the relation between them, in the third of the three preliminary sections summarized in §49, that devoted to considering *which is the first path our mind must enter on to begin well - which is to proceed in its investigation according to certain laws, taking as a standard a given true idea.*[4] He begins this section by announcing that we must first *consider that there is no infinite regress here,* i.e., that *to find the best Method of seeking the truth, there is no need of another Method to seek the Method of seeking the truth, or of a third Method to seek the second, and so on, to infinity.* Spinoza rejects the threatened regress by considering an analogous problem concerning, tools: in order to make tools, it seems to be necessary to employ to other tools, but the making of these tools, in turn, seems to presuppose the possession of yet prior tools, which require for their manufacture yet other tools, so that it seems that humankind could never come to the possession of tools at all. But of course men do have tools; and the problem is solved by realizing that, although men could indeed never make tools if they were utterly without them to begin with, men are in fact already equipped by nature at the outset with certain primitive tools (their hands and other parts of their bodies), which they can employ to make somewhat better tools, which in turn can be used in constructing a greater number of more sophisticated tools. By analogy, it may be possible for us to obtain better intellectual tools - i.e., a Method - if we already possess more primitive intellectual tools with which to make such better tools.

In order to enable us to see what our primitive intellectual tools are, Spinoza offers a description of true ideas. This description occupies §§-33-36, and may be summarized as follows:

[33] *A true idea . . . is something different from its object . . .*

[34] *. . .A true ideas [*of a thing, e.g., Peter*] is an objective essence*

of [that thing]*, and something real in itself . . .*

[35] *. . .* [C]*ertainty is nothing but the objective essence* [true idea] *itself, i.e., the mode by which we are aware of the formal essence is certainty itself . . .*

[36] *. . .* [T]*ruth, therefore, requires no sign, but it suffices, in order to remove all doubt, to have the objective essences of things, or, what is the same,* [true] *ideas .. . .*

From this last remark, Spinoza derives several specific features of the Method:

[36]*. . . [I]t follows that the true Method is not to seek a sign of truth after the acquisition of ideas, but the true Method is the way that truth itself, or the objective essence of things, or the ideas (all those signify the same) should be sought in the proper order.*

[37] *Again, the Method must speak about Reasoning, or about the intellection; i.e., Method is not the reasoning itself by which we understand the causes of things; much less the understanding of the causes of things, it is understanding what a true idea is by distinguishing it from the rest of the perceptions; by investigating its nature, so that from that we may come to know our power of understanding and so restrain the mind that it understands, according to that standard, everything that is to be understood; and finally by teaching and constructing certain rules as aids, so that the mind does not weary itself in useless things.*

[38] *From this it may be inferred that Method is nothing but a reflexive knowledge, or an idea of an idea; and because there is no idea of an idea, unless there is first an idea, there will be no Method unless there is first an idea. So that Method will be good which shows how the mind is to be directed according to the standard of a given true idea.*

Descartes and signs of truth.

With this much by way of background, let us now examine more closely the first of the claims that Curley identifies as posing a difficulty for Spinoza's conception of Method. What does it mean to say that the truth *requires no sign,* and that the Method is therefore not to seek a sign of truth after the acquisition of ideas? One way to

approach this question is to ask what it would be like to have a method that did seek for a sign of truth after the acquisition of ideas. The most obvious example of a philosopher having such a method is Descartes, who claims to locate a sign of truth in the clarity and distinctness of ideas.

It is important to recall that at no time does Descartes identify the property of clarity and distinctness with the property of truth. Rather, his investigation of the reason for his certainty about his own existence as a thinking thing induces him - provisionally at first -to adopt clarity and distinctness as a criterion, or sign, of truth. (*So I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule that whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true.*[5]) The adoption of this criterion, of course, raises an immediate question: how can we know that clarity and distinctness really provide a reliable indicator of what is, after all, a quite different property, namely truth? Descartes provides a proof that we could not be deceived in regarding our clear and distinct ideas as true, arguing from (1) God's existence as a most perfect being, and (2) our introspectively discoverable lack of any faculty for withholding assent from present clear and distinct ideas. Since this proof itself relies on ideas whose acceptance is based on their clarity and distinctness, however, the further question immediately arises of whether Descartes is really entitled to regard the proof as satisfactory; and this, of course, is the problem of the Cartesian Circle. If the Cartesian cannot solve this problem, he will be unable to validate his grounds for accepting his criterion of truth, provoking just the kind of infinite regress Spinoza seeks to prevent.

Spinoza deals directly with Descartes' proof and its alleged circularity in his own geometrical reformulation of the *Principles of Philosophy*. In that work, the proposition that *whatever we perceive clearly and distinctly is true* is presented as Proposition 14 of Part I. The demonstration of the proposition is an accurate rendering of the Cartesian proof from God's perfection, and distinguishes clarity and distinctness as a property that is distinct from truth. Spinoza discusses the alleged circularity of Descartes' procedure in his Prolegomenon to Part I, where he considers the possibility of the following objection:

> *Since God's existence does not become known to us through itself, we seem unable to be ever certain of anything; nor will we ever be able to come to know God's existence. For we have said that*

everything is uncertain so long as we are ignorant of our origin, and from uncertain premises, nothing certain can be inferred.

Descartes replied to this objection, Spinoza writes, by asserting that we cannot doubt whatever is perceived clearly and distinctly while it is so perceived, and that therefore we can come to a certain knowledge of God's existence, even though His existence is known only through a proof, *so long as we attend very accurately to all the premises from which we have inferred it.*

Spinoza immediately goes on to say, however, that *since this answer does not satisfy some people, I shall give another.* Although he does not explicitly state the reason why the first answer does not satisfy everyone, his supplementation of it makes clear why it is inadequate as it stands. Descartes has consistently maintained that we cannot doubt the truth of any clear and distinct idea while we are considering it. Afterwards, however, we can consider the hypothesis that we are deceived by God or an evil demon even about matters of which we are most certain, and we find that we can use this hypothesis to doubt whether clear and distinct ideas are really true. This is because, although no clear and distinct idea can be doubted while entertained, the proposition:

(C) Clear and distinct ideas are true.

is not yet **itself** perceived clearly and distinctly. Accordingly, we can call (C) into doubt, and, through this general doubt, we can indirectly call into question all of those clear and distinct ideas that we found ourselves unable to question when we attended to them directly and individually. Now, Descartes' subsequent proof of (C) aims, at least in part, to render (C) itself clear and distinct, and hence indubitable while it is being entertained. However, even if we assume that the proof is successful in this, what is to prevent the same skeptical difficulty from arising again? **While** we are considering Descartes' proof *very accurately*, of course, we may not **then** be able to doubt (C). But what is to prevent us from afterward again calling (C) itself into question by the familiar hypothesis that we are deceived? After all, Descartes himself admits that *we can be certain of nothing so long as we are ignorant of our origin*; hence the initial premises of the proof of (C) the old hypothesis seems to render uncertain, and so to render the conclusion uncertain as well. In short, we seem to have the very same problem with (C) that we already had with our earlier clear and

distinct ideas, and so we seem to have made no real progress.

Spinoza's own response avoids this difficulty by pointing out that, once we have actually formed a clear and distinct idea of God's true nature, by whatever means, we will no longer be **able** to give serious consideration to the old hypothesis that we are deceived by the author of our being even about those matters that we regard as most certain. There will therefore be no grounds left on which we **can** call the truth of (C) into question. The very attempt to find a ground for doubting (C) via such a hypothesis will **now fail**, since we will find the idea of such deception incompatible with our clear and distinct (and hence certain or indubitable) idea of God's true non-deceptive nature: *Wherever we then direct our attention in order to doubt . . . we shall come upon nothing from which we must not instead infer that it is most certain.* Accordingly, once (C) has been rendered clear and distinct, and therefore indubitable, by the proof from God's perfection, it will **remain** completely indubitable through the absence of any seriously-entertainable challenge. Our newfound certainty about the reliability of clarity and distinctness as a criterion of truth will remain unimpaired. Under these circumstances, we may add, Descartes would obviously be entitled to accept the reliability of his criterion. For the minimal principle of belief, *accept that which is so completely and permanently indubitable that it cannot be seriously challenged*, is one that every person cannot help but follow.

But although Descartes could hardly be criticized for assenting under such circumstances, there remains something less than ideally satisfying about this proposed resolution of his skeptical doubts. For in spite of all our efforts, we can never really bring ourselves to see the truth of our ideas directly; we can only make ourselves fully certain of them, certain that our certainty will be permanent and unchallengable, und certain that these certainties are not errors. Curley, who argues convincingly that Descartes himself intended something like the resolution Spinoza offers him, thus writes that, *Descartes is working with a concept of proof for which it does not hold that if there is a proof of* **p**, *then* **p** *is true. He admits that indubitability is compatible with falsity* (Curley 1978).[7] This assertion, however, must be interpreted with some care. For Descartes is certain that he can demonstrate (via a proof of God's non-deceptiveness) that a contradiction follows from the hypothesis of someone's having indubitable-but-false ideas. Thus, I

prefer to put the point by saying that Descartes himself would have to admit (1) that anyone who had the power to doubt the truth of clear and distinct ideas (even while having them) would see no contradiction in the hypothesis that such ideas were false; and (2) that he can find no contradiction in the supposition that God might have created a world populated entirely by perfectly rational beings who had that power.

Spinoza and signs of truth.

In contrast, Spinoza's own procedure in the *TIE* differs from Descartes' in a notable and crucial respect: it involves no effort to demonstrate the reliability of any criterion of truth. Given his familiarity with Descartes, it is unthinkable that Spinoza should neglect such a demonstration through mere oversight; if he does not attempt to provide one in a work like the *TIE*, it can only be because he thinks it unnecessary. Moreover, he has a strong potential motive to try to render such a demonstration unnecessary. For he could thereby avoid not only the infinite regress of Methods for finding proper Methods that is threatened by the Cartesian Circle, but also the less-than-ideally-satisfying solution to that Circle just described. Finally, the identification of truth with objective essence in §34, along with the subsequent identification of objective essence with certainty in §35, suggests a reason **why** he could regard such a demonstration as unnecessary: namely, that truth itself is in his view a directly introspectible property. The view that Spinoza regards truth as directly introspectible finds additional support in a later remark as well:

> *As to what constitutes the form of the true, it is certain that a true thought is distinguished from a false one not only by an extrinsic, but chiefly by an intrinsic denomination... [T]here is something real in ideas, through which the true are distinguished from the false... So the form of the true thought must be placed in the same thought itself without relation to other things* [(§§69-71)].

Now, Spinoza's claim that *truth requires no sign* immediately follows §§34-35 and is drawn as a conclusion from them. It thus seems overwhelmingly likely that Spinoza means by this claim to deny the need for a separate criterion of truth - such as Descartes proposes - and that he does so on the grounds that truth itself is an internal characteristic or *intrinsic denomination* of the true idea and is therefore

directly accessible without the need for a criterion. I see no grounds in the *TIE* for thinking that he means by it anything other than or in addition to this.

Intrinsic denominations and the Method.

It is likely to appear at this point as though Spinoza has avoided the need to demonstrate the reliability of a sign of truth in a purely formal way, by changing the meaning of the word 'true' so as to rob it of its ordinary meaning of correspondence with reality. Spinoza would not agree, however. As §69 itself suggests, he does not simply abandon the aspect of correspondence in the *TIE*: truth is still to involve both an intrinsic **and** an extrinsic denomination. More specifically, he has already claimed at §§41-42 that *the idea is objectively in the same way as its object is really...[A]n idea must agree completely with its formal essence.*

Yet reassuring as these remarks may be about the ultimate role of correspondence, they seem to resurrect a familiar problem. For hasn't Spinoza now just replaced Descartes' explicit problem - how we can know clarity and distinctness to be a reliable sign of truth - with an implicit problem of how we can know the truth to involve both an intrinsic **and** an extrinsic denomination? If we may extend Spinoza's orginal analogy between true ideas and tools, we may say that the true idea is meant to be more like a level than a yardstick. For whereas both kinds of tools can be used as standards, the reliability of a yardstick must be established by an external criterion. The level, in contrast, requires no such criterion: it belongs to its very nature that, whenever it indicates levelness, that indication is at once a measure of the levelness of the object tested **and of the level itself**. Nonetheless, the fact that a level requires no external standard is not obvious at first glance, but rather only after one has grasped the physical principle on which the level works. Similarly, it appears that we must achieve some prior theoretical understanding of truth before we can be expected to agree that truth **does** always involve both an intrinsic and an extrinsic denomination, and hence that it is able to serve as sign of itself in a way that does not simply abandon the original requirement of correspondence. Although it may be that some directly introspectible feature of ideas is not merely a sign of truth but truth itself, it still appears that we require some prior philosophizing if we are to

recognize with confidence that this is really so.[9]

Spinoza is evidently quite aware that his identification of truth with a particular intrinsic characteristic of ideas requires support, and he seems to hold that some of this support, at least, cannot be given until the second part of the Method. For although he asserts in the *TIE* [§-64,§68] that all clear and distinct ideas are true, and strongly implies the converse, he does not actually state whether clarity and distinctness **are** the intrinsic denomination that constitutes the form of truth. On the contrary, he puts off more specific inquiry with the explanation that *what constitutes the form of the true thought ... must be deduced from the nature of the intellect* [§ 71]. The nature and definition of the intellect pertain to the second part of the Method, and are not fully settled when the *TIE* breaks off after §110.[10]

But there is no inconsistency here. For although truth, Spinoza promises, will prove to be an internal characteristic of ideas that is directly introspectible (and thus requires no external criterion), that does not by itself entail that we must immediately and unproblematically **know** that this very characteristic **is** truth. Spinoza's accounts of our need for a Method consistently imply that both the ability to avoid confusing this characteristic with others, and the full understanding of this characteristic as the proper object of our search for truth, lie at the end of a lengthy process of reasoning and reflection. That truth requires no **sign**, in the sense of a Cartesian criterion, does not entail that we require no **labor** to isolate and appreciate the truth that already characterizes some of our ideas.

True ideas and removal of doubt.

Still, if Spinoza is right about the need for a Method to distinguish and appreciate the internal characteristic of truth, then are we not threatened with something like another version of the Cartesian Circle? For if at the start we do not fully recognize and understand what truth is, what is to prevent us from supposing that we are deceived by a supreme deceiver in everything, even though (unappreciated by us at the time) we do in fact have some true ideas? And how can we then legitimately reject this skeptical supposition without attempting to rely on some of the very ideas that it calls into question?

Spinoza answers this question in §79. It is an answer that will be familiar to readers of his Prolegomenon to Part I of *Descartes'*

Principles of Philosophy, cited earlier:

> *...[O]nly so long as we have no clear and distinct idea of God, can we call true ideas in doubt by supposing that perhaps some deceiving God exists, who misleads us even in the things most certain. I.e., if we attend to the knowledge we have concerning the origin of all things and do not discover - by the same knowledge we have when, attending to the nature of the triangle, we discover that its three angles equal two right angles - anything that teaches us that he is not a deceiver then the doubt remains. But if we have the kind of knowledge of God that we have of the triangle, then all doubt is removed. And just as we can arrive at such a knowledge of the triangle, even though we may not know certainly, whether some supreme deceiver misleads us, so we can arrive at such a knowledge of God, even though we may not know whether there is some supreme deceiver. Provided we have that knowledge, it will suffice, as I have said, to remove every doubt that we can have concerning clear and distinct ideas.*

As we have seen, Spinoza holds that the final part of the Method is to obtain a true idea of the *cause of all,* i.e., God. It does not matter that this idea of God is obtained before the skeptical doubts about even our most certain ideas have been completely refuted. For once it is obtained, by whatever means, this true idea of God will show us that such doubts are unwarranted, and it will prevent us from continuing to engage in them. Although this is essentially the same response that Spinoza recommends on Descartes' behalf, Spinoza's own position nevertheless differs in at least two respects from Descartes', even if we suppose Descartes to adopt Spinoza's recommendation. First, Spinoza's true idea of God will presumably block the hypothesis of deception not in virtue of God's benevolence, but rather in virtue of his lack of personhood, and, more generally, through a resulting understanding of the fundamental structure of the universe and the place of the human mind within it. Secondly, Spinoza will not remain forced to admit even the theoretical consistency of a world in which false ideas meet his criterion of truth. For Spinoza's final criterion of truth, unlike Descartes', will be (directly introspectible) truth itself, and truth is not even theoretically compatible with falsity. He thus avoids the less-than-ideally-satisfying character of the Cartesian solution as described earlier.

Finally the discussion of skepticism at §79 also casts light on the second of the two claims that Curley identifies as problematic for Spinoza's Method: the claim made at §36 that a true idea is *sufficient to remove all doubt*. Spinoza deduces this claim from the identification of truth with certainty, made at §35. His treatment of our idea of God and our idea of the triangle at §79 confirms that Spinoza holds two views about true (and therefore certain) ideas that Descartes holds concerning clear and distinct (and therefore certain) ideas: (1) their certainty entails that they cannot be doubted while they are actually being entertained; and (2) their certainty is compatible with their later being called indirectly into doubt by skeptical hypotheses, if such hypotheses have not themselves been ruled out. Thus, we must interpret Spinoza's claim that true ideas are *sufficient to remove all doubt* to mean only what Descartes would mean by it, namely, that having such ideas is incompatible with doubt about their subject matter **while they are being attentively considered or entertained**. We must not interpret it to entail that the same subject matter cannot later be called into question while we are **not** entertaining those ideas.

Just as there is no inconsistency in the notion of truth as a directly-introspectible property that can be well-distinguished from others and recognized as truth only after reasoning and reflection, so there is no inconsistency in Spinoza's notion of true ideas that are indubitable-while-entertained but indirectly dubitable when not entertained, via skeptical hypotheses that may themselves eventually be blocked by the attainment of further true ideas. Although we may not be guaranteed in advance that we shall ever achieve the true ideas necessary to block these hypotheses, the fact that true ideas cannot be doubted while we are entertaining them will provide us with at least some power to persist in the right direction. What remains to be seen is whether Spinoza's discussions of fiction, falsity, and doubt can be consistently supposed to play a role of the kind he gives them in our progress towards knowledge. It is to that question that we now turn.

II

In his outline of the structure of the *TIE* at §49, Spinoza cites two goals for the first part of the Method, the part concerned with fiction,

falsity, and doubt. These goals are: (1) to *show how to distinguish a true idea from all other perceptions*, and (2) to show how *to restrain the mind from those other perceptions.* I will begin by considering the first of these goals, raising two questions about it: first, whether its pursuit can consistently constitute a part of the Method; and second, whether investigations of fiction, falsity, and doubt can consistently be regarded as useful means toward its achievement.

Distinguishing true ideas.

Spinoza grants that if anyone should happen to proceed in the proper order of investigation, he would never have any reason to doubt anything, and would proceed properly without an explicit plan [§ 44]. Because many causes prevent men from being so fortunate, however, it is necessary to acquire by a deliberate plan *what we cannot acquire by fate*. This plan requires us to consider an already existing true idea and to take its truth as a standard by which we can judge other ideas, derive the nature and powers of the intellect that produces it, and proceed to derive rules suitable to that nature for the furtherance of our understanding. In order to take truth as a standard in this way, it is clearly necessary first to distinguish true ideas from others, just as we must distinguish a level from other objects before we can use it as a standard to judge and investigate levelness. To this extent, the first goal of the first part of the Method seems unexceptionable.

It may nevertheless be objected that we have no need of a special part of the Method to enable us to distinguish true ideas from others, on the grounds that having a true idea **immediately** enables us to distinguish true ideas from others. Spinoza remarks in general that investigating Nature in the proper order *requires a considerable capacity for making accurate distinctions . . . and much effort* [§45], which suggests that he does not regard the ability to make accurate distinctions as a simple matter. And as we have already seen, the assertion that truth requires no sign does not itself entail that everyone can immediately distinguish truth from other characteristics. On the other hand, he also claims in *Ethics* 2P43 that *he who has a true idea at the same time knows that he has a true idea, and cannot doubt the truth of the thing*; and it may justly be questioned whether this proposition can be reconciled with the need for a Method to distinguish

true ideas from others.

First of all, it should be noted that the *TIE* contains no assertion similar to the first clause of *Ethics* 2P43. (The *TIE* does of course assert, as already noted, that whoever has a true idea cannot doubt the truth of the thing while he has this idea.) Spinoza demonstrates *Ethics* 2P43 from the same kind of considerations that he has already used earlier in Part II to support the identification of each idea with the idea of that idea [*Ethics* 2P21S, where it is also said that *as soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows it*]. But in the *TIE*, Spinoza emphasizes, as the very first point in his characterization of true ideas [§§33-36], that an idea is something **different** from its object, and insists that this is as true when the object is itself an idea as when the object is anything else. Although the *TIE* emphasizes that knowing is a necessary precondition for knowing that one knows [§34], it does so in a way that seems intentionally to avoid asserting that the primary act of knowing is **itself** an act of knowing that one knows. If the *Ethics* contradicts the *TIE* on this point, that by itself does nothing to undermine the internal consistency of the *TIE*, which is our primary concern.[11]

Nonetheless, I think it is possible to reconcile the *TIE* with the *Ethics* on this point. The *Ethics* clearly makes room for **some** *sense in* which an idea and its object are different. A mode of extension and the idea of it can in this sense be considered as different - despite their underlying identity - just in virtue of their being considered under different attributes. Similarly, a mode of thought and the idea of that mode can be considered as different - despite their underlying identity - just in virtue of their being considered in two different ways ('formally,' in the one case; 'objectively' in the other). Surely even the Spinoza of the *Ethics* would grant that two different ways of considering the same mode (i.e., as a mode of extension and as a mode of thought; or as an idea, and as an idea of the idea) constitute two different ways of directing one's attention. And if this is granted, then it will be possible to have a true idea of one's true idea, or *know that one knows*, without having explicitly directed one's attention to this reflective knowledge; and it may even be that achieving this reflective redirection of attention requires considerable preliminary effort. Moreover, even if reflective 'knowing that one knows' is itself meant to be immediate and utterly unproblematic in the *Ethics*, there remains a

difference between knowing that a **particular** true idea is true, on the one hand, and knowing how to distinguish correctly the entire **class** of true ideas from the class of untrue ideas, on the other. This latter task may still require additional knowledge, such as the Method might provide. Indeed, the sentence immediately preceding *Ethics* 2P43 implies as much: *For he who knows how to distinguish between the true and the false must have an adequate knowledge of the true and of the false...* [emphasis added].

Imagination and doubt of true ideas.

I conclude that distinguishing true ideas from others need not be so simple a matter, for Spinoza, as to render its inclusion as a goal of the first part of the Method pointless. We must now ask whether consideration of fiction, falsity, and doubt can play any significant role in achieving this goal. In trying to distinguish one kind of object it is sometimes useful to describe other kinds of things, particularly if they are otherwise likely to be confused with objects of the first kind. On the other hand, it is sometimes better simply to describe the first kind of thing itself in sufficient detail to prevent any confusion from arising. And in the case of true ideas, it is not yet obvious that discussion of other ideas would be useful at all. Spinoza provides an initial description of true ideas at §§33-36, and additional information about them in later sections of the *TIE*. Is this not sufficient? Are not the differences between true ideas and others so great as to render confusion either way impossible, just as Joachim claims?

There are several reasons why it might be useful to describe ideas of imagination even if there were no danger of confusing them with true ideas. It might be, for example, that by contrasting imaginative ideas with true ideas we could direct our attention to distinctive features of true ideas that might later be useful in defining and describing the nature and powers of the intellect. Spinoza does not actually reach the point of defining the intellect before the *TIE* breaks off, but he does provide a list of properties of the intellect from which the definition is to be derived. Although he remarks shortly thereafter that *false and fictitious ideas, **as such**, can teach us nothing concerning the essence of thought* [§110; emphasis added], several of the properties are arguably **suggested**, at least indirectly, by prior consideration of just these phenomena.[12] More generally, Spinoza indicates that part of the point

of the Method is to *accustom men to their own internal meditations*, and that, as noted, progress in investigating Nature requires *considerable capacity for making accurate distinctions* [§45]. If nothing else, reflecting on and distinguishing fiction, falsity, and doubt might be useful practice.

But Spinoza goes much further than this in justifying his discussions of imaginative ideas. Despite Joachim 's claim that there could be no danger of mistaking true ideas for ideas of imagination or vice versa, Spinoza insists that there is just such a danger. He asserts that we must

> *restrain the mind from* ***confusing false, fictitious, and doubtful ideas with true ones****. It is my intention to explain this fully here, so as to engage my Readers in the thought of a thing so necessary, and also because there are many who* ***doubt even true ideas,*** *from not attending to the distinction between a true perception and all others*[*§50; added emphasis*].

How can we *doubt true ideas* when truth requires no sign and is sufficient to remove all doubt? He immediatly goes on to explain:

> *So they are like men who, when they were awake, used not to doubt that they were awake, but who, after they once thought in a dream that they were certainly awake (as often happens), and later found that to be false, doubted even of their waking states. This happens because they have never distinguished between the dream and the waking state.*

For Spinoza, 'as for Descartes' the distinction between waking and sleeping serves as a model and a metaphor for the distinction between intellect and imagination. This is no accident. Both conceive of dreaming as the lowest, least coherent, form of imagination; and as a result, the relation between dreaming and all waking experience is in some ways like that between imagination (which includes much waking experience) and intellect. Indeed, Spinoza characterizes false ideas as *hardly anything but dreaming with eyes open, or while we are awake* [§66]. To apply the model, then, we may say that those who 'doubt of true ideas' are men who, when they entertained true ideas, used not to doubt the truth of those ideas. Later, however, they thought an untrue, or imaginative, idea to be true, and subsequently discovered it to be untrue. This now leads them to doubt the truth even of their previous true ideas, as a result of their failing to attend to the

distinction between true ideas and imaginative ideas. Clearly, the fact that true ideas are distinguished from others by an internal and introspectible characteristic will not itself prevent us from *doubting true ideas* in this way; we must also learn what that characteristic is, and learn to attend to its presence or absence in distinguishing true ideas from false ones. Again, the fact that we cannot doubt of true ideas while they are entertained will not itself prevent us from later calling them into question as a result of our unfortunate experience with other ideas; we must also ensure that we do not confuse memories of our true ideas with our memories of those other ideas.[14]

False ideas.

It seems relatively easy to see how the existence of false ideas might cause us to doubt *of* true ideas in the way Spinoza describes. A false idea, on his account, is a confused perception, in which *something is affirmed of a thing that is not contained in the concept we have formed of the thing.* The tendency to affirmation, or assent, is a feature of every idea considered in itself; what distinguishes false ideas from *fictions is only that while the presentations appear to him [who has the false idea], there appear no causes from which he can infer (as he who is feigning can) that they do not arise from things outside him* [§88]. This assent is of course something less than the certainty of a true idea. The mere assent involved in an uncontroverted false idea can be overcome by the addition of concurrent ideas (as actually occurs in both fiction and doubt); whereas certainty is truth itself and cannot be overcome while we maintain our true idea. Nevertheless, if we think *abstractly or universally* [cf. §76] in such a way that one idea confusedly includes or extends to **both** remembered certainty **and** mere assent, without distinction, then our later recognition that we acquiesced wrongly in a false idea may cause us to doubt whether we did not also acquiesce wrongly in an idea that was in fact true and certain. For we will fail to notice that our earlier true idea involved something **more** than mere assent or affirmation.

It may be questioned whether we **can** fail to remember that an earlier idea involved more than mere assent or affirmation, on Spinoza's account, or whether we can think of it again in any way without once again being certain. But memory itself is at least often a matter of the imagination rather than the intellect [§§81-83]. If we recall the

experience of some or all true ideas only in abstract or otherwise confused terms,[15] and do not recall to present attention the true ideas themselves, our recollection of the idea may well be confused, inadequate, and a cause or subject of doubt.

Fictions.

More difficult, perhaps, than the question of how false ideas can be confused with true ideas so as to produce doubt of true ideas is the question of how **fictions** can be confused with true ideas to produce such doubt. As noted, Spinoza holds that the only difference between fictitious and false ideas is that in fiction we do have other ideas that allow us to infer that our first idea does not arise from things outside us; thus our actual affirmation of it may be forestalled. But if we do not actually affirm our fictitious ideas, how can we confuse them with true ideas?

Spinoza's discussion of fictions is organized around his distinction between *fictions concerning existence,* and *fictions concerning essences alone or essences together with some actuality or existence.* I believe Spinoza thinks that there are two ways in which confusion of fictions with true ideas is possible, each related particularly to one kind of fiction. The first kind of confusion concerns *those things that are supposed in Problems, the discussion of which concludes his* consideration of *fictions concerning existence.* He provides two examples, expressed as follows: (1) *let us suppose that this burning candle is not burning*; and (2) *let us suppose that it is burning in some imaginary space, or where there are no bodies* [§57]. Neither of these, he claims, are really fictions. Rather, in the first case, we are recalling a candle that was not burning, and understanding concerning the present candle what we understood concerning the previous one, without attending to the flame. In the second case, we are directing the *mind, toward the sole contemplation of the candle, considered in itself alone,* perhaps so as to infer that the candle has within itself *no cause for its destruction.* In both cases, we have *no fiction, but true and sheer assertions.* Because the verbal expressions of these truths resemble those of fictions, someone who does not clearly grasp the distinction between true ideas and others may, in recalling these truths, incorrectly *conclude that they* **are** mere fictions, and so come to doubt the truths that they contain.[16]

The second way in which confusion is possible concerning truth and fiction results from the fact that we derive conclusions both from fictions and from true ideas. At the conclusion of his consideration of *fictions concerning essences alone or essences together with some actuality or existence,* Spinoza writes:

> *Someone, perhaps, will think that fiction is limited by fiction, but not by intellection. That is, after I have feigned something, and willed by a certain freedom to assent that it exists in nature in this way, this has the consequence that I cannot afterwards think it in any other way. For example, after I have feigned (to speak as they do) that body has such a nature, and willed, from my freedom, to be convinced that it really exists in this way, I can no longer feign an infinite fly; and after I have feigned the essence of the soul, I can no longer feign that it is square.* [§59]

This is to mistake what were, in fact, true ideas, necessarily entailed by other true ideas, for mere consequences of arbitrary fictions, and hence to doubt them.

But who are 'they', who confuse fiction and truth in this way? Alexandre Koyré (in Spinoza 1964) suggests that Spinoza has in mind Hobbes, with his conventionalism about reason (particularly as expressed in *De Corpore* I, iii, 8), and also theologians who hold voluntaristic theories of belief. Although Hobbes, at least, may well be one object of attack in this passage, Chapter I of Spinoza's *Short Treatise Concerning God, Man, and His Well-Being* suggests another, less individual, target. There Spinoza takes some care to defend his proofs of the existence of God from the objection that his idea of God, on which the proofs are based, is merely a fiction, without real consequences.This kind of objection would be familiar to him both from the history of the ontological argument in general, and from Descartes' *Fifth Meditation* in particular. In the course of defending his ontological proof of God's existence, Descartes considers the objection that:

> *. . .[W]hile it is indeed necessary for me to suppose God exists, once I have made the supposition that he has all perfections (since existence is one of the perfections), nevertheless the original supposition was not necessary. Similarly . . . it is not necessary for me to think that all quadrilaterals can be inscribed in a circle; but given this supposition, it will be necessary for me to admit*

that a rhombus can be inscribed in a circle - which is patently false [p.46; Descartes, AT, 1976, VII, 67].

Descartes' *response to this objection concludes:*

So there is a great difference between this kind of false supposition and the true ideas that are innate in me, of which the first and most important is the idea of God. There are many ways in which I understand that this idea is **not something fictitious** *which is dependent on my thought, but is an image of a true and immutable nature* [p. 47; Descartes, AT,1976,VII,68; emphasis added].

Since the idea of God is the true idea toward which Spinoza's entire Method is aiming, the confusion of truth with fiction that gives rise to this objection is well worth defusing in advance. Moreover, unlike Hobbes or the voluntaristic theologians, the objector to the proof of God's existence is concerned specifically with a *fiction concerning essences alone, or essences together with some actuality or existence*. Thus I believe that it is primarily the views of those objectors that are under attack.

Doubt.

Thus far, we have considered how falsity and fiction are relevant to the task of distinguishing true ideas; it remains to consider doubt. Spinoza characterizes doubt as *the suspension of the mind concerning some affirmation or negation, which it would affirm or deny if something did not occur to it, the ignorance of which must render its knowledge of the thing imperfect* [§80]. It arises when we have two ideas, one of which *is not so clear and distinct that we can infer from it something certain about the thing concerning which there is doubt* [§78]. As an example, he offers our belief about the size of the sun. If all we have is the sensory idea of the sun, then we will naturally affirm, and will not doubt, that it is just as it appears. When we come to have an idea of the general deceptiveness of the senses, however, we will doubt that the sun is as it appears, for we now have an idea that we can see to bear on the truth or correctness of the first, but without being able to see precisely how. If we come to have a clear and distinct idea of precisely **how** the senses operate and sometimes deceive, then we will know whether or not the apparent size of the sun is an illusion, and once again we will not doubt. Thus, he claims, we

can see that doubt is produced by taking up ideas in the wrong order, in such a way that we cannot be confident of the bearing of a later idea on an earlier one. He concludes that the cure is to proceed in the proper order, deducing true ideas from those that entail them. In this way, we will always understand the relation among our ideas, and will never doubt [§§78-80].

This account of doubt plays a double role in the first part of the Method. On the one hand, the first part of the Method is meant to show us how to distinguish true ideas from others so as to prevent *doubt of true ideas*. As a result, the discussion of doubt sheds light on the genus of which *doubt of true ideas* is a particular species. On the other hand, doubt is also **itself** one of the three kinds of imaginative ideas that are said to **produce** doubt of true ideas through our failure to distinguish them from true ideas.

It is difficult, of course, to see how we could fail to distinguish a suspension of the mind from certainty. But if we consider the example of the size of the sun and the discussion of the *deceiving God* [§§78-79], we can provide a plausible account of how doubtful and true ideas might be confused so as produce *doubt of true ideas*. For through observing instances of doubt, but without understanding the difference between an uncertain idea (such as the sensory idea of the size of the sun) and a true idea, we might come to doubt whether some or all of our true ideas are not potentially questionable or dubitable. This confused idea of the potential questionability or dubitability of our ideas would function exactly like the confused idea of the deceptiveness of the senses in Spinoza's example. It would thus generate doubt even about ideas that are in fact true and cannot really be questioned or doubted **when properly entertained**. In such a case, there would be confusion with respect to **both** *the idea that is the* **cause** of doubt, and the idea that is the **object** of doubt. For first, we fail to notice whether the abstract and confused idea we employ to cast doubt on our true ideas is itself true; and secondly, we fail to distinguish ideas which are themselves doubtful, in the sense that they can be objects of doubt even when entertained, from those that can only be doubted when not fully entertained.

I thus conclude that Spinoza can consistently regard his discussions of fiction, falsity, and doubt as legitimate aids to distinguishing true ideas from other ideas with which they are sometimes confused. In a

way, Joachim is right when he claims that there can be no possibility for Spinoza of mistaking a true idea for an idea of imagination or vice versa: the **intellect** cannot mistake a true for an imaginative idea, or an imaginative idea for a true one. Unfortunately, however, the **imagination** can conflate them, and thereby call into question true ideas to which we are then not currently attending. To put the same point in other words, no one would confuse true ideas and imaginative ideas if he were thinking clearly; but the need for a *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* arises precisely from the fact that we do not always think clearly. Doubt about true ideas can arise because 'thinking clearly' is itself one of the subjects concerning which we do not always think clearly.

Restraint of the mind.

The second of the two stated goals of the first part of the Method is to *restrain the mind from those other perceptions,* i.e., ideas of the imagination. Thus far we have considered how to avoid one special kind of doubt, namely, *doubt of true ideas*. But the avoidance of **all** fiction, falsity, and doubt is a worthwhile goal, from Spinoza's point of view. For to whatever extent the mind is occupied with these other ideas, it is to that extend prevented from attending to true ideas and deriving further true ideas from them. Moreover, the satisfaction of this goal would provide a sufficient rationale for including discussions of fiction, falsity, and doubt in the Method, even if those discussions had been of no use in satisfying the first goal of distinguishing true ideas from others.

At the outset of the *TIE*, Spinoza describes his struggle against desires for three apparent goods: wealth, honor, and sensual pleasure. Eventually, he reports, he came through persistent meditation to recognize clearly the need to give up pursuit of these apparent goods, because they were real evils, and to devote himself instead to the pursuit of the true good. Still, even this clear recognition, he writes, was not sufficient to make him resolve wholeheartedly to change his way of life; the desires for wealth, honor, and sensual pleasure remained insistent distractions that could not immediately be put away. Nevertheless he found remedies for those desires in the continued contemplation of the true good and the role of the three apparent goods as limited means to the true good. These remedies he

clarms, gradually brought it about that he was less and less distracted by desires for the three apparent goods.

In a similar way, the ability to distinguish true ideas and the recognition of the need to pursue them are, though necessary, not in themselves a complete guarantee that we will not slide back into the constant distractions of the three kinds of ideas of imagination - no more than grasping the distinction between waking and sleeping is a guarantee of never falling asleep. Accordingly, Spinoza takes special care to include in his discussion of each kind of idea of imagination specific remedies against that kind of idea, to enable us to see *how we shall be freed from each of them [§ 51].* In the cases of either fictions or false ideas *'concerning existence alone,'* the remedy dependes on the nature of the object. For those objects whose existence is an eternal truth, we need only clearly conceive the thing in order to avoid forming a fiction or false idea about its existence, since there can be no fictions or false ideas concerning what is seen to be necessary. For those objects whose existence is not an eternal truth, *we need only take care to compare the existence of the thing with its essence, and at the same time attend to the order of Nature.* The rationale for the former remedy is that the existence of each thing is as particular as its essence, so that mistaken attributions of existence arise from an overly-abstract conception of the thing's existence; the rationale for the latter is simply that the existence of non-necessary things arises from the order of Nature. In the case of fictions or false ideas *concerning essences alone or essences together with some actuality or existence*, the remedy is to render our ideas clear and distinct by attending to the most simple parts of *component things*. The reason for this is that fictions and errors arise from putting simple ideas together in a confused way, and attention to the simple parts prevents confusion. Finally, in the case of doubts, the remedy is, as already noted, to proceed in the proper order, so that we obtain no ideas whose bearing on other ideas is unclear. Since each of these remedies is derived from the specific account of the nature of the ideas of the imagination against which it is to be applied, the value of these remedies to the Method is itself sufficient justification for discussing the nature of those ideas.

III

Summary and evaluation.

As I have described his position in the *TIE*, Spinoza denies any need for a criterion of truth in the Cartesian sense. He also maintains that true ideas cannot be doubted while they are being presently considered, but holds that they can sometimes be called into doubt when they are **not** presently considered. Such doubt is a result of their being conflated, by the imagination, with the imagination's own products. In order to prevent this conflation and free the mind as much as possible from ideas of imagination, he holds that it is necessary to attend carefully and reflectively to the specific differences between true ideas and ideas of imagination, and to learn enough about the imagination to discover specific remedies against it. When this has been done, he maintains,we will be in a better position to derive the nature and powers of the intellect from our true ideas, and then to derive useful rules for gaining new knowledge and proceeding in the best order, with the result that we will be able to obtain the true idea of God. All of this, I have argued, is fully consistent.

Of course, even with these remedies, there is no guarantee that ideas of imagination will be immediately banished. In fact, in the case of doubt, we can see that the conditions of the **Method itself** prevent us from being completely able to employ the remedy. For the remedy against doubt is to proceed in the proper order. But the true proper order must match the order of Nature, and hence must begin with the idea of the source and origin of Nature - i. e., God [§§41-42, §49]. Until we have this idea, we cannot be fully immune to doubt, as Spinoza seems willing to allow in his discussion of the 'deceiving God' hypothesis [§79]. Yet obtaining this idea is itself the final step of the Method, so that at no substantial time **during** the pursuit of the Method will we be immune to doubt. This by itself is by no means a fatal objection, however. For Spinoza has consistently maintained that a true idea grants truth and certainty, even if we obtain that idea under circumstances in which we were previously uncertain. It is thus one thing to admit that we are not yet immune to all doubt, and another to claim that we will be lost beyond hope in doubt forever. It is part of the role of the Method to guide us around dangerous spots and bring us, by whatever way is possible, to the greatest perfection of

knowledge.

The real objection is not to the formal plan of the Method, but to its **execution**. For although the *TIE* appears to invite the reader to develop the Method along with the author, using one's own native tools, the reader is required at many crucial points - including both the account of truth and the account of ideas of imagination - simply to accept dogmatic and undefended assertions, with the explicit or implicit promise that the reasons will appear in the subsequent work referred to as *my Philosophy*. But to make assertions like these is to proceed out of order in a way that is indeed likely to produce serious doubt. When Spinoza writes, for example, that truth is an intrinsic denomination that also involves an extrinsic denomination, one simply doubts whether one should believe him or not. Ultimately, there is a great danger that the reader will give up on the Method without waiting to see whether it ultimately conducts him to certainty or not. Spinoza recognizes this danger, and urges the reader *not to reject these things as false because of Paradoxes that occur here and there . . .* [§46]. But this appeal is not likely to have much effect on someone who has already lost faith.

In a well-known passage of the *2nd Replies* [pp. 110-122; Descartes, AT, 1976, VII, 155-158], Descartes, draws a distinction between a work's *order* and its *method of demonstration*, and a second distinction between the *analytic* and *synthetic* methods of demonstration. Proper geometrical order requires simply that *the items that are put forward first must be known entirely without the aid of what comes later; and the remaining items must be arranged in such a way that their demonstration depends solely on what has gone before.* Both the analytic and synthetic **methods** *of demonstration are instances* of this **order**. Analysis *shows the true way by which the thing in question was discovered methodically . . . so that if the reader is willing to follow it and give sufficient attention to all points, he will make the thing his own. Synthesis, on the other hand, demonstrates the conclusion clearly and employs a long series of definitions, postulates, axioms, theorems, and problems.*

The *TIE* shows many signs of aiming to be an analytic work. It begins with a description of the author's own starting point, provides (like Descartes' *Discourse*) a list of provisional rules of life to be followed during the course of the project at hand, and constantly

addresses the reader as a fellow-inquirer in the attempt to develop knowledge from one's own inner rescources by means of a definite plan. The outline of the *TIE* calls for it to conclude with the attainment of the idea of God which, as the idea of the cause of all things, is the idea best-suited to be the starting-point of deductions. The *TIE* is then to be followed by the more systematic work, called *my Philosophy. It is thus tempting to think of the TIE* as an analytic introduction that leads us to the best starting-place for a comprehensive work in the synthetic method.

In the full Cartesian sense, however, the *TIE* cannot be considered a genuinely **analytic** work, because its frequent unargued assertions, to be defended only later, prevent its being fully in **geometric order** . Of course it may be replied that the requirement of absolute geometric order is too strict in a work of this kind, where all that matters is that we successfully arrive at the envisioned true ideas and certainty, by whatever route. Nevertheless, to the extent that Spinoza employs dogmatic assurances based on his grasp of the *Philosophy* that lies ahead, the *TIE* also fails to meet the condition of providing a plausible or natural *way by which the thing in question was [*or could be*] discovered methodically*. I think it likely that the *TIE* remained unfinished at least partly because he could not provide in it the fully plausible or natural 'order of discovery' that he seems initially to have aimed at.

It may sound paradoxical to say of a philosopher that he could not present his own work in the analytic method. For it seems that all he need do is to present his claims in the order in which **he himself** methodically discovered them. The reason why Spinoza cannot do that, I believe, is simply that he did not discover the main tenets of his philosophy by a process of natural methodical discovery; rather he discovered them, in large part, by reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of other philosophers, including Descartes, whose analytic style he tried, in the *TIE*, to follow.

My conclusion, then is that Spinoza's unfinished Method is not internally incoherent, but, as written, does suffer from that lack of proper order that produces doubt. If it is true that he himself could not find a natural analytic order of methodical discovery for his views, the fact provides additional and ironic confirmation of his claim that *all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.*

NOTES

1. *All quotations of Spinoza are from The Collected Works of Spinoza*, edited and translated by Edwin Curley.

2. Curley's editorial insertion at §49 treats §98 as the end of the second part of the Method, and §99 as the beginning of the third part. I do not think this can be right. Spinoza writes at §94 that *the chief point of this second part of the Method is concerned solely with this: knowing the conditions of a good definition, and then, the way of finding good definitions*. This can only be understood, I think, as treating the conditions of good definitions and the way of finding good definitions as the two elements of the main topic of the second part. (This reading is also consistent with his earlier characterization of the second part as concerned with *teaching rules so that we may perceive things unknown according to such a standard* [i.e., the true idea]. [§49].) But at §106-107, he still writes that:

> . . .*we are necessarily forced, by what I have taught in this second part of the Method, to deduce these* [i.e., the powers of the intellect] *from the very definition of thought and intellect. But so far we have had no rules for discovering definitions. ... we cannot give them unless the nature, or definition, of the intellect, and its power are known* . . . [emphasis added].

It should also be observed that § 99 contains no explicit declaration that a new part of the Method is beginning, such as occurs at the beginning of the first and second parts. The stated purpose of the third part of the Method is to *establish an order* [§49], and §-99 does begin with the phrase *As for order*; but it then proceeds immediately to state that order requires us to inquire as soon as possible whether there is a cause of all things, an enquiry which will be fully satisfied only by the **fourth** part of the method. Although Sections 99-106, taken together, do certainly have substantial bearing on the question of proper order, so too do a number of sections that are clearly within the first part of the Method, including §§41-46 and §80. The main purpose of the comments concerning order in §99-106 is to show how we must begin if we are to obtain rules for **discovering definitions**: that is, we must begin with a definition of the intellect itself, and generate rules for discovering other definitions from that.

3. Curley refers to Joachim in a footnote to this passage. For another statement of the objection, see Delahunty 1985.

4. In §29, he writes that *we must teach the Way and the Method by which we may achieve this kind of knowledge of the things that are to be known.* He then begins the next section with *To do this, the first thing we must consider.* . . It is therefore reasonable to suppose that he distinguishes the Way (i.e., the Way to the Method) from

the Method itself, and that sections §30-48 constitute the Way.

5. Meditation III of *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in Descartes 1984, vol. I, p. 24. AT VII, p. 35 (All citations of Descartes are from this edition, with additional page references to Descartes, AT, 1976). In the *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes adopts the criterion of clarity and distinctness at Article XXX. The reader is there referred back to the *Third Meditation* for a fuller treatment.

6. Translated as *Descartes' 'Principles of Philosophy'* in *Spinoza 1985*.

7. That Descartes' own resolution of the alleged Circle was in fact much like the one that Spinoza presents on his behalf is particularly suggested by Descartes' response in the *2nd Replies* to the objection that what we take to be true by the criterion of clarity and distinctness *may appear false to God or an angel, so that it is, absolutely speaking, false.* Descartes responds: *Why should this alleged 'absolute falsity' bother us, since we neither believe in it, nor have even the smallest suspicion of it? . . . [T]he evident clarity of our perceptions does not allow us to listen to anyone who makes up this kind of story.* [Descartes, 1984, vol. I, pp. 103-104; AT, 1976, VII, pp. 145-146] He thus seems to grant a kind of internal consistency to the objection, but retorts that we cannot accept it or find any positive reason to take it seriously.

8. This insistence on the correspondence of true ideas with their objects seems incompatible with the examples Spinoza gives immediately following the remark about intrinsic and extrinsic denominations, as Curley points out in a note. These examples are (1) the architect's true idea of a building *whether the building exists or not* [§69], and (2) the true idea of a sphere *that has no object in nature* [§72]. Presumably Spinoza would eventually have explained that such ideas do not have existing things in nature, but rather essences, as their objects. At least, this is the explanation of such ideas that he gives in the *Ethics*, and his distinction of fictions and falsehoods concerned with existence from those concerned with essences strongly suggests that he had this explanation available at the time of the *TIE* as well.

9. G.H.R. Parkinson (1954, pp. 13s) suggests that *distinctness in the Cartesian sense,* may be an extrinsic property of ideas, since it involves an absence of confusion with other ideas. It seems to me, however, that *Principles* I.45 treats distinctness itself as clarity of the internal parts of an idea, and the distinct idea's lack of confusion with other ideas merely as a consequence of this internal distinctness. There is evidence that Spinoza, at least, understood distinctness as internal. See §74, where Spinoza claims that distinct (and therefore true) ideas are sometimes **not** successfully distinguished from others that are themselves confused. See also §§63-65 and §68.

10. The *TIE* itself, in its unfinished state, gives little indication of how truth can be an internal characteristic of ideas while at the same time necessarily involving correspondence. However, one can speculate that, since Spinoza identifies the truly

possible with the actual, any idea that has enough internal adequacy to represent a genuinely possible state of affairs ipso facto represents an actual state of affairs. Indeed, given the identification of ideas with their objects in the *Ethics*, we might say that 'internal' adequacy and 'external' correspondence are ultimately just two different ways of considering the very same fact about true ideas.

11. In fact, there is at least one discrepancy between the *TIE* and *Ethics* 2P43: whereas §35 of the *TIE* identifies certainty with the objective essence (i.e., true idea) itself, *Ethics* 2P43D identifies certainty with true knowledge **of** one's own knowledge.

12. For example, the sixth property of the intellect - that clear and distinct ideas seem to depend on our power alone - is explicitly contrasted with the contrary characteristic of confused ideas, that they are often formed against our will. The seventh property - that the mind can determine in many ways the ideas of things that the intellect forms from other ideas - is illustrated by our ability to determine the plane of an ellipse by feigning that a pen attached to a cord is moved around two centers; and notice of this general method of obtaining geometrical ideas first arose in the discussion of false ideas [§ 72]. The eighth property of the intellect - that the more ideas express of the perfection of their object, the more perfect those ideas are - is illustrated by the fact than we admire an architect who designs a notable temple more that we admire one who designs a chapel; and the illustration, at least, appears to be suggested by the example of the architect's idea given earlier in the discussion of false ideas [§69].

13. See also *Ethics* 3P3S, where those who believe they act from a *free decision of the mind* are described as dreaming with their eyes open.

14. There is one disanalogy between *doubt of our waking states* and *doubt true ideas* that he passes over in silence. Presumably, it is usually while we are again **awake** that we doubt *even of our waking states*; at least, that is when Descartes doubted them. However, Spinoza could not allow that we *doubt of true ideas* while we are again having only true ideas. First, such doubt is ruled out by the doctrine that true ideas are sufficient to remove all doubt while they are entertained. Secondly, doubting in general, and hence *doubting true ideas* in particular, is **itself** one of the states that he has just identified as analogous to **dreaming** (i.e., **not** having true ideas). He would explain the disanalogy, of course, as arising from the fact that much waking experience is still imaginative, after all, and hence compatible with present doubt.

15. Spinoza would presumably hold that Descartes does this in doubting the truth of all clear and distinct ideas at once via the hypothesis of the evil demon.

16. Spinoza does not explicitly describe such a process of coming to doubt the contents of *those things that are supposed in Problems,* but it is clear that he is trying to forestall our confusing them with fictions; and the potential that this confusion would have for causing doubt seems to me the obvious

explanation for his concern. It should be mentioned that Curley, in a note, questions whether *'verae'* should really be translated as 'true' in the phrase *'verae ac merae assertiones'* (rendered as 'true and sheer assertions'). However, it seems to me that, given the way Spinoza describes his examples, they **are** intended as examples of true ideas. The first refers to *understanding* the candle, which for him entails truth; and the second involves the inference that the candle contains no cause for its own destruction, an inference that he would clearly regard as correct [cf. *Ethics* 3P4].

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bei mehr als einem Drittel von Spinozas unvollendet gebliebenem *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* handelt es sich um detaillierte Analysen von Ideen, die dem Vorstellungsvermögen (*imaginatio*) entstammen. Dies sind: *falsche, fingiert und zweifelhafte Ideen*. Trotz der Wichtigkeit dieser Analysen ist oft gefragt worden, ob ihr Vorhandensein im Text mit der Grundkonzeption von Wahrheit und Methode übereinstimmt, die den Hauptinhalt des Werkes darstellt. Denn der dargelegte Zweck jener Analysen vom Vorstellungsvermögen besteht darin, *die wahre Idee von den übrigen Vorstellungen (perceptiones) zu unterscheiden ... und den Geist davor zu bewahren ... zweifelhafte Ideen mit wahren zu vermengen*. Spinoza behauptet aber zugleich, daß die Wahrheit keines Kennzeichen bedarf; weiterhin stellt er fest, daß die Erkenntnis einer wahren Idee völlig zureichend ist, alle möglichen Zweifel zu beseitigen. Es scheint vielen Forschern, daß diese Behauptungen die Tendenz haben, Spinozas Analysen des Vorstellungsvermögns überflüssig zu machen.

Ich argumentiere, daß der Versuch Spinozas, wahre Ideen von anderen Ideen zu unterscheiden - eine Unterscheidung, die auf Grund einer eingehenden Behandlung von Fiktion, Falschheit und Zweifel getroffen wird - doch **nicht** seiner Hauptvorstellung von Wahrheit und Methode widerstreitet. Im ersten Abschnitt meines Aufsatzes untersuche ich die Auffassung Spinozas von dem, was das Wesen wahrer Ideen konstituiert; hier wird die Art und Weise gezeigt, wie diese Wahrheitsauffassung sich zu Spinozas Konzeption einer philosophischen Methode überhaupt verhält. Insbesondere diskutiere ich die Bedeutung und Tragweite von zwei seiner Behauptungen: erstens, daß die Wahrheit *keines Kennzeichens* bedarf; zweitens, daß eine wahre Idee *genügt, um jeden Zweifel zu heben*. Hier stelle ich fest, daß diese Behauptungen am besten verstanden werden können als Reaktion Spinozas auf Deskartes' Erläuterung des Verhältnisses